



Representative

Jim Dunn



1998 Session Preview

17th District

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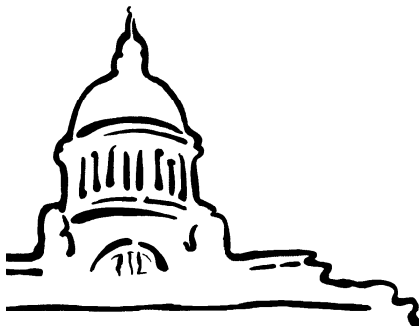
Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

Committees:

Trade and Economic
Development, *vice chair*
Higher Education
Government Administration

State Appointments:

Community Trade and
Economic Development
Board
Community Economic
Revitalization Board
Washington Economic Development Finance
Authority



Dear Friends:

As the Legislature begins the 1998 session, I'd like to let you know what issues I'm working on in Olympia for the 17th District.

My number one goal in serving you is to fight for a **smaller, less intrusive, more effective government**. As a hard-working taxpayer, you deserve no less. The Legislature has made great progress in scaling back state government and giving you tax relief, but there is still much to be done.

We'll also be working on a **transportation funding package** that will provide money for roads *without* raising the gas tax.

Education will be a top priority. With the results of a statewide fourth-grade test in – only 48 percent of fourth-graders met the reading standards, and only 22 percent met the math standards – it's clear we need to bring more **accountability** into our school system. We must raise academic standards so our children are educated in the basic skills that are vital to their future success.

I'm introducing several **tax relief bills** that, if enacted, will help people in southwest Washington.

The Legislature will continue to pass **anti-crime measures** that protect law-abiding citizens. Recent tragic events have shown us that group homes for juvenile offenders must be subjected to stricter standards. Also, the ongoing tragedy of drunk driving will be addressed by legislation this year.

It is an honor to serve you in the state House of Representatives. I hope you will find this information helpful, and I encourage you to call, write or e-mail me with your questions, comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Good news on the budget!

Because the Legislature kept government spending down in the last budget, the state will have an estimated \$861 million surplus by mid-1999. Much of this money is going into a "rainy day" reserve that will be used in case of future economic downturns.



Taxes: Letting you keep more of your money

Many people in the 17th District see more than 50 percent of their income go to government. I am committed to not only reducing your tax burden, but to making sure the tax dollars that are collected are spent wisely, efficiently, and with a minimum of waste.

I will be working on the following tax measures in the coming months:

✓ **TAX FAIRNESS FOR WASHINGTON RESIDENTS WHO WORK IN OREGON**

If you are a Washington resident working in Oregon, you must pay Oregon personal income taxes on your wages. Like many of you, I believe the level of taxation is clearly unfair. It far exceeds the cost of the services Oregon provides to Washington residents, and I believe it should be significantly lower. I have been in contact with officials from both states, and I hope we can reach an agreement on this troublesome issue.

Let me be clear: I don't object to Oregon imposing some sort of tax on Washingtonians who work there, but I do object to the current high rate. This is a case of taxation without representation, and it should end.

✓ **LOCAL FUNDS FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Many communities in the 17th District struggle to find the funds to pay for roads, water and sewer systems, and other such necessities. My legislation would allow a county or city to use a special excise tax of up to 6.5 percent on the construction of new commercial, industrial or residential structures. *This tax*

would be credited against the state sales tax and could be used only for public facilities in the county or city where the tax is collected. This is not a tax hike, but a tax credit.

Every community needs a solid infrastructure and a reliable source of funds to build and maintain it. If enacted, my bills will assure quality infrastructure for people in the 17th District.

✓ **KEEPING LOCAL DOLLARS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

When you pay your Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET), much of that money goes into a general state fund. I think, however, that more of it should stay in your local community. My bill would let cities and counties keep more MVET funds.

The Legislature is working to give power to local communities. We are asking counties and cities to take more responsibility for providing public services, so we must also provide them with the funds to do so.



Transportation

One of the first items on the legislative agenda is a transportation bill that *does not raise the gas tax*. We do need to improve and expand our road system, but I don't believe we should raise your taxes to do it.

It is estimated that we'll need about \$2.5 *billion* dollars to pay for transportation maintenance and improvements in the coming years. And with southwest Washington's exploding population and economy, our area certainly needs increased funds. So where will we get the money?

- **Moving more MVET funds to transportation** - Right now, only 16 percent of MVET funds go directly to transportation. Many legislators agree this percentage should increase.
- **Using some of the budget surplus for crucial transportation projects**

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- **Making sure funds are spent wisely** - Next month, the results of an audit of the Department of Transportation will be published. This audit will show us where there is waste in the DOT, and how we can spend taxpayer dollars better.

Other transportation issues:

✓ LICENSE FRAUD

Washington state residents whose cars carry illegal Oregon license plates may be saving themselves some money, but they cost the state – and you, the taxpayers – a great deal. To be exact, the state now loses \$15.7 million per year in motor vehicle excise taxes, and \$40 million to \$50 million in sales taxes.

Not only is license fraud unfair to people who play by the rules, but it is an expense we cannot afford. I am introducing legislation that will increase fines and penalties for people who engage in license fraud.



Education

A good education can give a child a lifetime of rewards. But without a solid grounding in the basics – reading, writing, math, science, and the like – a child is deprived of the skills he or she needs to succeed. *We must re-empower parents and teachers.*

The Legislature will continue to pass education reforms that make sure *every* child has the chance to learn in a challenging, safe environment.

- **Accountability:** Students, teachers and administrations must be held accountable for results. The Legislature will work to increase local control of, and involvement in, schools. There's no doubt that students, parents and teachers will benefit from community-centered, rather than government-directed, schools.

- **Standards:** Unless kids are challenged in school, they won't learn. We must make sure that school curricula demand high academic achievement from students.
- **Funding:** The Legislature *increased education funding by 7.5 percent* in 1997-99. We fully funded public school construction needs.
- **Safety:** If a school isn't safe, children can't learn. Last year we passed measures that allow teachers to remove disruptive and/or violent students from the classroom.



Crime

This year the Legislature will continue to pass tough anti-crime bills that will help protect law-abiding citizens.

✓ JUVENILE JUSTICE

A few months ago, a young girl in Stanwood was raped and beaten to death by a 17-year-old juvenile offender who walked away from his group home. This terrible tragedy has made it clear that we must pass much stricter guidelines for group homes that house criminal offenders.

It is outrageous that violent criminals are allowed to simply walk away from supervision. In the next session, I will support legislation to help prevent this sort of tragedy from happening again.

✓ DRUNK DRIVING

In order to keep drunk drivers – especially repeat offenders – off the roads, we will be considering several pieces of legislation. Here are some of the proposals I support:

- Stiffening sentences for drunk driving and driving without a license
- After the first DUI offense, keeping subsequent convictions on a person's permanent record

Senior news

In the '98 session I will support a **managed-care disclosure bill** that will give seniors and other citizens more information about their current, or future, managed-care plans.

Some of the bill's provisions include a prohibition on withholding information about health-care benefits, services, treatment options and plan performance comparisons from enrollees and the general public. People who are enrolled in plans, as well as people considering enrolling in plans, will be able to make more knowledgeable, informed decisions about their health care.

As the saying goes, "Knowledge is Power." *Full knowledge about health-care plans is essential for seniors. This legislation will make it easier for you to know everything you need to know about your health-care plan.*

Also, many seniors in the 17th District have contacted me about **funding for nursing homes**, as well as **proposed new rules for adult family homes**.

- I am introducing a bill to give additional funding to nursing homes. The last budget did not accurately reflect the number of seniors in nursing homes, and my bill will correct the problem.
- In order to ensure the highest quality in adult family homes, there is now a moratorium on new ones. We want to make sure the adult

homes currently operating are not only providing quality care, but will be able to serve seniors in the long-term.

Listen to the Legislature on-line!

If you have a computer with a sound system, and have access to the Internet, *you can listen to all deliberations of the state Legislature – live*. You can also listen to previous days' deliberations. This service is provided by TVW, Washington state's version of C-Span – it is the statewide nonprofit television network.

The website address is **www.tvw.org**. The software you need to listen to the Legislature is free and can be downloaded over the Internet.

Let me know what you think

As your representative, I need to hear your thoughts and concerns about the issues before the Legislature. If there is an issue or set of issues you are concerned about, please contact me. It's important that I get your input, so that I can serve you better. **My e-mail address is dunn_ji@leg.wa.gov, and the Legislative Hotline number is 1-800-562-6000.**

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